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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 006881

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TAGS: [PRL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MORS](#) [UNSC](#) [EG](#) [IL](#) [LE](#) [IQ](#)
SUBJECT: A/S WELCH DISCUSSES MIDDLE EAST PEACE, IRAQ WITH
ARAB LEAGUE SECRETARY GENERAL

Classified by DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: A/S Welch met with Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa on November 15 to discuss the Middle East peace process and Iraq. On the Israeli-Palestinian situation, Moussa encouraged reinvigorated U.S. leadership and promoted the international conference; A/S Welch responded that the important thing is to have both sides talking again. Moussa defended Arab League statements on lifting the financial embargo to the Palestinian territories, saying it did not imply violating the international mechanism. Moussa criticized the U.S. veto of the proposed UNSCR condemning the Israeli attack on Beit Hanun; A/S Welch pushed back, saying that a U.S. veto was actually desired by the Arab group, or it would have been written differently. On Iraq, Moussa warned against an immediate American withdrawal or partition of the country, said the major problem is lack of functioning institutions, and added that it would be chaos if U.S. troops were withdrawn. A/S Welch emphasized the importance of maintaining institutions of democracy in Iraq, and encouraged more Arab support to help resolve the sectarian issue. END SUMMARY.

Reinvigorating Middle East Peace

¶2. (C) Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa began the November 15 meeting with A/S Welch by saying that the "time has come for a change in American diplomacy in the Middle East." He lamented the "peace process is dead," but there is an opportunity to revive it through U.S. leadership. He criticized the Quartet for "doing nothing," rather than playing a "useful role." Moussa thought that an international conference would be beneficial.

¶3. (C) A/S Welch affirmed US readiness to revive the process but pushed back on an international conference. He responded that both sides must come to the table, that there be restored on-the-ground confidence in dialog, and that the Israelis and the Palestinians be given political cover to take action. He expressed US willingness to work with any Palestinian government that meets Quartet principles, and warned of an "evil Quartet" of Iran, Syria, Hamas, and Hizballah that does not want the peace process to succeed.

Breaking The Financial Embargo

¶4. (C) When asked by A/S Welch, Moussa said that Arab League statements about breaking the financial embargo to the Palestinian territories do not imply automatic violation of the international mechanism. In a vague linkage to humanitarian conditions, he said that the Palestinian people are facing starvation, and that this requires immediate action. A/S Welch responded that the international mechanism

is working, albeit after a delay, and that European assistance to Palestinians is actually higher now than before the Hamas government came to power.

U.S. Veto of UNSCR Condemning Israeli "Massacre"

15. (C) Moussa criticized the U.S. for vetoing the Arab League-sponsored UNSCR condemning the recent Israeli "massacre" of Palestinians at Beit Hanun, saying it was particularly bad for the U.S. image. A/S Welch replied the Arab group actually wanted a U.S. veto on this resolution, or otherwise would have either drafted one from which the US could abstain or agreed to a Presidential statement. Moussa criticized the lack of U.S. participation in the resolution drafting process, which he thought might have made for a more palatable resolution. A Moussa aide suggested having regular consultations on major issues, to avoid the kind of "miscommunication" that led to the US veto in this case. A/S Welch responded that he is open to communication at any time, and singled out Darfur as an issue that might benefit from regular consultations.

Iraq

16. (C) On Iraq, Moussa said that it was time to leave past disagreements in the past, since now "we are all in the same boat." He said that the Arab League does not want to see an immediate American withdrawal from Iraq, nor a tripartite partitioning of the country, which he described as a "recipe for disaster." He also emphasized that Arabs need to know

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that the U.S. does not intend to hand the country over to the Shi'a. Moussa described the main problem in the Iraq as a lack of any functioning institutions, such as the army, police, and judiciary, and that democracy will not solve the problem.

17. (C) A/S Welch agreed that cooperation is essential, though he emphasized the importance of maintaining the institutions of democracy in Iraq. He said that there may be changes in US thinking, but that there will not be a major shift in policy. He encouraged more Arab support for solving the sectarian issue, citing lengthy visits from Iranian officials but none from Arab leaders, excluding Moussa himself. Moussa said that he stands ready to visit Iraq again whenever it might prove helpful.

18. (U) A/S Welch's party cleared this message.
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